

Statement on behalf of the African Group

“ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AT THE UNITED NATIONS”

AGENDA ITEM 150

11 October 2022

Chairperson,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group.

The African Group would like to thank the Secretary-General for his reports on the Administration of Justice at the United Nations contained in documents A/77/151 and A/77/156.

Chairperson,

The African Group attaches great importance to an independent, impartial, transparent, and professionalized administration of the justice system within the United Nations and is convinced that the latter will contribute to a responsible management of administrative disputes of United Nations personnel, in a functional and effective manner.

We support efforts to strengthen the United Nations' internal system of justice to ensure that work-related disputes receive the fullest attention of management and are resolved in a fair, timely and cost-effective manner.

The African Group wishes to highlight that informal conflict resolution is an equally crucial component of the system of administration of justice within the United Nations as it reduces resorts to unnecessary litigation and is cost effective. Thus, we encourage continued recourse to the informal resolution of work-related disputes. In this context, we are pleased to note that increased use of mediation by the Office, in appropriate cases, has contributed to successfully resolving issues without having resort to litigation.

The Group commends the United Nations Justice System for persisting despite the immense challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The United Nations Justice System continued to function using flexible work arrangements in order to ensure business continuity, cognizant of the added value of in-person presence.

We take note of the recommendation of the Internal Justice Council to appoint the Presidents of the Tribunals for seven-year terms and note the diverse views of the Dispute Tribunal, the Appeals Tribunal and the Secretariat.

The group is also pleased to see a decrease in the backlog of pending cases by the United Nations Dispute Tribunal.

Chairperson,

The Group notes with concern that field personnel continued to carry the highest number of caseload, as they face both hardship and stress related to the nature of their contractual status.

Measures taken by the Secretary-General to strengthen the work of the Office of Legal Assistance to better support staff, particularly those working in the field, are a welcomed step in ensuring access to the United Nations internal justice system.

The Group reiterates its appreciation for the combined support provided by the Office of Administration of Justice's outreach efforts to staff opting for self-representation, including by providing them sound dispute and appeals toolkits. It remains important that applicants who decide to be self-represented have all the necessary information to successfully file a case and be confident to have a fair and satisfactory outcome.

In the same vein, and while acknowledging the current financial constraints on the Organization, the Group welcomes the measures introduced by management to increase the handling of the case-load and deem it appropriate to maintain the half-time judges model, which has proven to enhance the effectiveness of the system of justice.

Chairperson,

In conclusion, the African Group wishes to renew its continued and unwavering commitment to support the Organisation's efforts to improve its Internal Justice System and provide staff members, as its most important asset, the justice they deserve in an impartial, accessible and accountable manner. Given that positive work climate also leads to a positive culture, it is equally important that Administrators endeavor to create a sound ecosystem at the workplace that values human resource.

I thank you for your kind attention.